



The Words of the Orme Family



Life as Moonchild Far From Blessed

Young Oon Orme (Donna Collins)
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Phoenix -- Many mothers and fathers have high expectations for their children, but few as lofty as Donna Collins' parents.

"When I was born, my dad was surprised I was crying at all," she said. "I was supposed to be perfect - born without sin."

Collins was conceived in the spring of 1969, shortly after her parents were joined together in one of the first mass marriages presided over by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, then a little-known Korean sect leader.

As the first "blessed child" born in the West, this cute, curly-haired blond was supposed to embody Moon's vision that the world's religions would come together under his messianic leadership.

Moon and his wife were to be the True Parents of a spiritual master race that would spread his message - a mix of Christianity, spiritualism and right-wing politics - to the four corners of the Earth.

Today, the story of Donna Collins and Sun Myung Moon is a cautionary tale of misplaced idealism and worldly power.

Like many new religious movements of the '60s and '70s, the Moonies have not always practiced what they preached about universal brotherhood and family values.

Collins' story begins in 1960, 10 years before her birth.

Her mother, Doris Walder, was living in Oregon, trying to get out of a bad first marriage. That's when she met Young Oon Kim, the first missionary sent to the West by Moon.

Walder was 30 years old, and ready for something new. Captivated by a vision of uniting the Christian world, she signed on as one of the first three U.S. missionaries of the Unification Church, founded by Moon just six years earlier in Korea.

"My mother had a spiritual conversion, which to her was real," Collins said.

"She thought this was the answer. They were going to change the world and save humanity. There was an idealism in the organization then that isn't there today. All races are one. All religions are one. These are noble things. It's not like they were joining the KKK."

One of Walder's first assignments was to establish the church in San Francisco. She set up an early Unification Church center near Fisherman's Wharf. It failed, and it would be another decade until the movement found fertile ground among the spiritual seekers of Northern California.

Meanwhile, Walder was sent to Europe as a Moonie missionary. In the late 1960s, she met her future

husband, Dennis Orme, while giving a talk on Unificationism at Findhorn, the famous spiritual community in northern Scotland. Dennis Orme had been born into the Church of England, and had worked as a ship navigator in the merchant navy before joining the Moonies.

Dennis and Doris Orme, who declined to be interviewed for this story, were married in 1969. Theirs was part of the first mass Moonie wedding to include Western converts.

Compared with later services, such as Moon's highly publicized 1982 blessing of 2,075 couples in Madison Square Garden, the Orme's wedding was an intimate affair, bringing together a mere 43 couples.

Men and women joined together in the Unification Church allow Moon to select their spouse. They also consummate their marriage in a three-day ritual, complete with prescribed sexual positions.

Dennis and Doris Orme took Moon's advice to heart, and nine months later, a child was born. They christened her Young Oon, the birth name of Donna Collins.

She first met Moon at age 2. She doesn't remember the encounter, but she has a photo of her sitting on the lap of the messiah, getting a big hug.

Donna's first memories are of living in a group home in England. She didn't live alone with her parents until she was 15 years old.

During the mid-1970s, leading Korean members of the Unification Church would come visit the first "blessed child" in the Western world.

"When I'd walk into the room, they'd all gasp, seeing this little blond, curly-haired child," Collins said.

"When I was 7 or 8, people would actually come and confess things to me about their sex lives. I can laugh about it now, but it was pretty psychotic. I thought I was pretty special, but I was like some kind of china doll.

"My parents never saw me, and I was always being handed off to other people. They'd take me out of the closet for meetings, or for holidays."

Dennis Orme had become the British director of the Unification Church, and the English tabloids were full of exposes about his "sinister sect."

Moonies were described by the Daily Mail as "robots, glassy-eyed and mindless, programmed as soldiers in this vast fund-raising army with no goals or ideals, except as followers of the half-baked ravings of Moon, who lived in splendor while followers lived in forced penury."

On behalf of the church, Orme filed a libel suit against the newspaper. The Moonies lost the case, were ordered to pay \$2 million in court costs, and questions were raised about their tax-free status.

Meanwhile, young Collins was on the blessed fast track. It had long been assumed, she said, that she was destined to marry one of Moon's sons. At age 11, she was sent off to live in Korea.

"Moon said I must learn the language of the fatherland and the spirit world, and fulfill my role as the first blessed child," she said.

After living in a strange culture for a year, Donna got sick, and was able to go back to stay with her parents, who were now working for the church in Germany. But at age 13, she was summoned back to Korea by Moon.

"I pleaded with my father not to send me back, but Moon told him something bad would happen to me

if I didn't go," Collins said. "They took me back to the airport screaming."

Once in Korea, Collins, a teenager, began asking tough questions about what she saw in Moon's inner circle.

"He and his kids didn't live by the teachings. His sons would come in and swear all the time. They were having steaks flown in from America. I'd been eating rice and kimchee for three years and getting serious dysentery. It was a joke. I started asking myself, 'What is godly about all this?' "

Then the 13-year-old was called in for an audience with the messiah.

"He got livid that somebody would have the nerve to question him and screamed at me for 30 minutes. I was bawling and shaking uncontrollably. Then he'd hold my hand, and say, 'I am your parent. One day, you will be a great woman for God.' I calmed down and said, 'Thank you. Thank you.' And then I'd write in my diary about how great it was to be with the True Father."

But Collins had gotten the reputation as a rebel, not a good choice for the messiah's daughter-in-law. At 15, she went to live with her parents in New York, where they had been sent by the church.

For the first time in her life, she was going to an American high school and living a relatively normal existence.

"I started to date and live a double life. I was just being an ordinary person, but I had to make up all these lies when people would ask what my dad did for a living, or why I lived in Korea and was named Young Oon."

It was a long process, but by the time she was 22 years old, Collins finally felt like she had put the Moonies behind her.

After making the break, Collins began working on her parents. "I'd challenge them, asking, 'Why does he own all these villas and chateaus around the world and there are members of the church who don't have enough to eat, and need medical care?' "

Finally, her parents started the long process of separating themselves from Moon. But after decades of raising money for the church, Collins said, her parents suddenly found themselves living as impoverished senior citizens.

"They were left destitute for a while," she said. "They were used. A lot of people joined the church because they met people like my parents. Most members never meet Moon. But my parents were very charismatic. They laid the foundation for his church."

Collins now lives in the Phoenix suburbs with her husband, Jonathan, an Englishman she met after leaving the Moonies, and their two young children.

For a while, they took her parents into their home, one of thousands that have sprung up in the blazing subdivisions that ring this growing desert city.

Her house is a temple to the classic American family, with the TV blaring in the living room and her daughter's playmates tumbling down the stairs.

"This is exactly what I want - a normal life. We live and have fun and get into arguments, but my daughter knows I'm here for her every day," Collins said.

"My daughter's thing at the moment is to ask what I was doing at her age. I don't really go into it. I said, 'I lived in a boarding school,' and she said, 'Didn't you want to live with your mom and dad?' That kind of puts it all in perspective for me."

After staying with her and her husband for a while, her parents pulled up and moved to Australia.

"My dad now believes Moon is the Son of Perdition - the Antichrist," she said.

"My parents still think the nuclear family is weird. To them, it's insignificant. After living on this roller coaster for so long, trying to save the planet every day of their lives, it's not that exciting to just live and be human."



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